

## YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON

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SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:19-24

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

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No slave can belong to two masters ... You cannot serve God and money.  
 (Goodspeed)

One of the recognized forms of insanity or mental disturbance is called schizophrenia. It happens when the personality becomes split or divided until the individual seems to be fighting against himself. He may commit crimes or acts of violence which are completely out of keeping with his normal character. He may weep in the most joyous situations, and laugh on the most solemn and sad occasions. He is really two persons, one battling against the other. Some modern psychologists think that many of the Biblical accounts of demon possession were simply cases of schizophrenia, in which the patient did things completely out of keeping with his normal character, as if some other personality were in possession of the body.

Man is created to be one unit, one personality, one soul. Countless lesser units go to make up this one entity -- all the organs and members of the body, all the cells, nerves, muscles, bones, sinews, and tissues. But in the normal body every cell is subject to the intelligence, the personality, the spirit which rules the body. When any cell becomes a law unto itself and rebels against the body, it produces a cancer. When an organ fails or refuses to function in harmony with the rest of the body, the whole body becomes sick, and if the situation is not corrected, the body perishes, and the rebellious organ with it. It would be a strange person indeed in which one leg insisted on turning right, and the other leg insisted on turning left, independently of the intelligence which says where the whole body is to go.

Many people, however, are trying their best to live this kind of divided existence. They have never quite made up their total minds as to whether they will serve God or mammon -- whether they will go to the right or to the left. They try to face in two directions at once, to travel in opposite directions at the same time. For a time, they may think they are successful in beating Nature and getting away with it, but not for long. A house -- or a person -- divided against itself cannot stand.

There is a classic story of this kind of division found in the 17th chapter of the second book of Kings. The King of Assyria had conquered Israel, and carried away all of the inhabitants of the Samaritan district captive. Then he had sent back people of a different race and nationality to colonize the land. These new settlers soon began to have trouble with wild, voracious lions. They decided that the local god who had jurisdiction of that territory was angry because in their ignorance they had neglected him. Therefore they appealed to the King of Assyria for help. He sent them a priest of Israel, who taught them about the God whom the Israelites had once worshipped in that land. The new colonists accepted Jehovah, but simply added him to their pantheon of gods. The Bible says (17:33) "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods."

Jesus said that no man can serve two masters. Goodspeed renders it, "No slave can belong to two masters," which is not fully true. A slave may be the joint property of two masters, but no matter how much such a slave tries, his regard for the two masters cannot be equal. He will hold to the one, and despise the other; he will attend to one, and neglect the other; he will stand by one, and make light of the other; he will attach himself to one, and think lightly of the other. Even if the slave succeeds in straddling the fence, two masters would not long tolerate a situation in which neither could be sure of the undivided loyalty and allegiance of the slave or servant. Even dividing equally the time in which he served each one would not fully solve the problem for a man can divide his time, but not his soul. While serving one, he would be thinking about how he could serve the other; his mind and heart would be elsewhere, and he would be an unprofitable servant.

Because God is omnipotent, there is no room for another. Omnipotence divided in half is no longer omnipotence. Omnipotence reduced by one tenth of one per cent is no longer omnipotence. God must be all to you, or he is nothing to you. You cannot divide your allegiance between him and anything else. He is an infinite God -- and infinite means without limitation. If the infinite God is at any point obliged to limit his activities because of another lesser god, then the infinite God is no longer infinite. He is either ALL, or NONE. He is a jealous God, who because of his very omnipotence and infinity demands all, or none. There is no half-way mark; there can be no compromise. No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. We must serve the Lord with ALL the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength, with a personality and an allegiance undivided.

Does this mean that we must spend all our time in churchgoing, or in some sort of religious devotions? No, but it means that everything that we do, or say, or think, every dollar of wealth we seek, every pleasure we take, every bit of our social life, every political power, every skill of craft or profession, must be God-centered, and must be devoted to his service. It does mean that every phase of life should begin and end with God -- that every activity should be an act of worship -- that we should seek first to establish the kingdom. Then as we seek for all these things which can so easily become gods competing with the infinite, omnipotent God, as use them as an expression of our devotion to him, and as a means of advancing his kingdom on earth.

It is not wrong to lay up treasures on earth, if one never loses sight of the fact that they are God's, and that they must be used for God's purposes. It is no sin to be rich, and it is no crime to be poor; but either the rich man or the poor man can so divide his allegiance by lusting after riches that he no longer is an acceptable servant of the infinite, omnipotent God, who demands all or none. No man can serve two masters. He may divide his time, but not his soul. His soul will hold to one master and despise the other; will attend to one and neglect the other; will stand by one and make light of the other. Are you serving the one infinite, omnipotent God, or are you trying to divide your allegiance, and developing a bad case of spiritual and perhaps mental schizophrenia in the process?